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Prime Minister Mike Eman introduces "Europe Meets the Americas"

Aruba's Prime Minister, Mike Eman, welcomed media to the Dr. Edward Cheung Center for Innovation on Tuesday evening to officially announcing an groundbreaking event to take place on Aruba in May, "Europe Meets the Americas."

The Prime Minister had casually mentioned such an event and its purpose at previous events, with the long-term vision of expanding and diversifying Aruba's economic base. Increasing air and sea transport between Aruba and Europe are part of the plan for modeling Aruba into a gateway of commerce



PM introduces Marion Kappeyne van de Copello

between European nations and the various countries of South and Central America. Banking, transport, attractive tax incentives and duties, would encourage them to use the island as a jumping off point for commerce with Latin countries.

The Europe Meets the Americas conference is scheduled for May 5 through 8 at the Renaissance Convention Center in Oranjestad. The aim of the event is "to boost trade between the continents benefiting from the location, the safety and security of Gateway Aruba as well as the benefits Aruba offers as being part of the Dutch Kingdom." The conference will offer the unique opportunity for those interested in opening new markets and networking with trade partners

to meet face-to-face and discover opportunities for commerce that will prove mutually beneficial.

The theme for this first conference will be "Sustainability," with emphases on companies operating or manufacturing within this sphere. Participants are encouraged to explore the many opportunities for commerce that will provide developing nations with the financial partners needed to fully develop their resources. Companies have the option of providing information that can be placed into a system that will match them to the best potential partners to explore and develop concrete business opportunities during the one-on-one sessions.

Continued on pg 3

Obama says US cannot put off gun control 'any longer'



President Obama at the White House today, with Vice President Biden in the background

WASHINGTON (AFP) - President Barack Obama Wednesday signed 23 executive actions to curb gun violence and demanded Congress pass an assault weapons ban, saying America cannot put off gun control

measures "any longer."

Obama also called on Congress to pass deeper measures, including universal background checks for gun buyers and bans on high-capacity magazine clips and armor-piercing bullets, in re-

sponse to the Newtown school massacre last month in which 20 small children and six adults were gunned down.

"Congress must act. Congress must act soon," Obama said, pledging to use the full weight of his office to pass new gun control measures.

"These are our children."

"What we should be thinking about is our responsibility to care for them and shield them from harm," Obama said, at an event at the White House, which included relatives of children killed at Sandy Hook Elementary school.

"This is our first task as a society, keeping our children safe. This is how we will be judged and their voices should compel us to change, he said, warning gun control reforms could not wait "any longer."

The measures were drawn up in less than a month by Vice President Joe Biden, who praised the courage of relatives of gun crime victims from Newtown and elsewhere for showing up at the event.

Continued on pg 6



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Aruba's Police force confer with Rotterdam police officials



Division and Department heads of ALE attend

Thirty-five division and department heads of Aruba's Police Department are spending two days in conference with members of the Rotterdam police force from Holland. The educational seminars are being conducted by Deputy Commissioner of Police Martine Vis, heading the delegation, and Deputy Commissioner of Police Cees Knappe.

Aruba's Chief Commissioner of Police Adolfo Richardson explained the ex-

ercise is part of an all-encompassing plan to be implemented within the police department by the end of 2013. Official will instigate a number of policies as is practiced in private industry requiring members of the force set goals and learn to "be responsible for achieving their goals and meeting expectations." Department head will be conducting performance evaluations every three months as of the beginning of 2013.

"We approached the Rotterdam police as we feel their population, which is comprised of almost 142 differing nationalities, very much mirrors Aruba's," explained Police Commissioner Richardson.

"They were most agreeable about sharing their experience, tactics and techniques."

Though tourism security is a part of the discussion, and the Aruba Hotel and Tourism Association, AHATA, was kind enough to donate their conference facilities for the seminars, the issues discussed went well beyond that sector of police concern. "We have four districts and the Department of Detectives has two divisions, addressing short and long-term investigation. We are covering all concerns to all division and department heads during the lectures



Deputy Police Commissioner Martine Vis presents

from the Rotterdam police." Part of the plan for increased security by the end of 2013 is the instillation of video surveillance at a cost of 4.2 million Aruban florins "from the colony to Arashi, every populated part of the



Aruba's Chief Commissioner of Police Adolfo Richardson island will be covered." By Rosalie Klein



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Fatum Holding NV (Fatum) has purchased the shares of Thoma Assurantieadviseurs BV and Thoma Assuradeuren BV in Lochem, the Netherlands (Thoma)

ORANJESTAD - Fatum Holding NV has purchased retroactively as of January 1st, 2012 the shares of Thoma Assurantieadviseurs BV and Assuradeuren BV in Lochem, Netherlands. Thoma has been active for over 50 years as a full service consultancy and underwriting agent. With a premium turnover of 50 million Euros, Thoma is one of the larger insurance companies in the eastern region of the Netherlands. Thoma Assurantie- en Pensioenadviseurs employs about 60 people. With the takeover, the involvement of the consultancy and the agility of the underwriting agent remain, while Thoma can reinforce itself using the

expertise of Fatum. The independent working method of Thoma Assurantie- en Pensioenadviseurs will remain undiminished.

Founded in 1904, Fatum is an intermediary insurance company situated in Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire and Sint Maarten. On their home market, Fatum is a leading insurer for damage, life, and health insurance for the private and business market. Guardian Holdings Limited, a financial service provider for insurances, pensions, and investments, is a shareholder of Fatum since 2003 and has an A-stable rating (AM Best).

By overtaking Thoma, Fatum realizes its ambition to establish a solid position in

the Netherlands. Its subsidiary company and damage insurance company Fatum General Insurance NV can realize a further growth by cooperating with Thoma. The new combination bundles the involvement of the intermediary, the agility of the underwriting agent, as well as the knowledge and capital of the insurer.

Hans Thoma, CEO of Thoma: "This step means that we can keep serving our private and business relations as well as our brokers in the same good way as they have been used to for more than fifty years. The overtake by Fatum also means that we are given the opportunity to realize further growth in a rap-

idly changing market, without having to compromise our quality. That is something I am really proud of."

Hans Thoma will keep working for Thoma Assurantie- en Pensioenadviseurs.

René van den Broek, CEO of Fatum in the Netherlands: "This acquisition confirms the lasting presence of Fatum in the Netherlands and fits in the growth strategy that Fatum has in mind. The commercial agility of Thoma and the financial security of Fatum General Insurance as the accountable party present good opportunities to reinforce this position and optimize the profitability."

"Europe Meets the Americas" Continued from pg 1

During the Tuesday's presentation, Vernon Huerta of Ernst & Young financial services presented some suggestions where such partnerships will provide great advantages to nations such as Colombia, with enormous oil and natural gas potential as well as harnessing renewable energy sources.

Sunday, May 5, a gala welcome reception and officially opening ceremonies will welcome the delegates. The following day will feature guest speakers on various financial and commercial opportunities of partnerships between the two hemispheres, and the balance of the conference will be dedicated to one-on-one sessions and networking.

Prime Minister Eman presented the concept to Dutch ministers and legislators last year and has received the endorsement of the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Frans Timmerman. It was agreed that the turbulent nature of politics and the economies of many Latin American countries has hindered commerce between Europe and the southern Americas; the stable, secure nature of Aruba is very attractive in making it a base of operations between the two. The Dutch Ministry has "loaned" the services of one of their top individuals, their Ambassador to Colombia, Marion Kappeyne van de Copello, to facilitate the upcoming conference.

Registration and information regarding the upcoming conference can be made through Aruba Investment Association, ARINA, located on the Weststraat next to the Oranjestad bus terminal, in the former Numismatic Museum building. Visit the Europe Meets the Americas website: <http://eumeetsamericas.com> for a program and more information. ARINA can be contacted directly regarding the event at telephone number (297) 582-5659 or via e-mail: info@eumeetsamericas.com.

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Mrs. Lucia Franken wins \$2,798,82 at the Aura Casino!



Mrs. Lucia Franken found her lucky streak in the newly renovated Aura Casino "where players win". She won a total amount of \$2,798,82 at the Aura Casino at the Occidental Grand while playing on the brand new slot machines! Staff & Management want to wish Mrs. Franken congratulations on her great win on the slot machine "Quick Hits." The center of Aruba has definitely shifted here at the Aura Casino, which happens to be smack-dab in the middle of all the action on Palm Beach. Come and try your luck, maybe you can be one of Aura Casino's next lucky winners!



Stern introduces the spectacular Mazda CX5

At the end of November 2012, the incredible model CX5 of the Mazda was chosen as the Car of the Year 2012-2013 by the commission of the Car of the Year in Japan. The CX5 is the first Mazda model that is equipped with an entire SKY-ACTIV technology which includes the motor, transmission, body and chassis. This provides the CX5 with a refined maneuverability and gives it exceptional gas mileage, security and reduced emission. It is also the first Mazda model which represents a new design theme in body design of the Mazda, the KODO-Soul of Motion.

During the first nine months of its introduction, orders have surpassed all expectations. The volume of cars sold has surpassed the sales of three years together. This, among others, is what qualified the CX5 for its nomination as the Car of the Year in Japan. The last vehicle to have won Car of the Year in Japan was the MX5 – the Roadster of 2005. This is the fourth time that Mazda has won this coveted prize.

Kiyoshi Fujiwara, top executive of Mazda commented: "We are thrilled to have the CX5 receive such a coveted award and appreciate the warm support and encouragement of our fans. Spurred on by this honor, we will continue to dedicate ourselves to the task of crafting cars that only Mazda can, in order to continue winning the support of our fans and customers into the future."

To see the spectacular Mazda, visit the Stern car dealership. Stern is the exclusive dealer for the world renowned Mazda on Aruba. For more information, call them at 582-3838. They are located at Tanki Leendert 122. Visit them also on Facebook: Mazda Aruba.



CARNIVAL SCHEDULE

WED. - JAN - 16

7:30 p.m. - Pre-Finals Aruba Caiso & Soca Monarch Festival (Joe Laveist - San Nicolas)

THU. - JAN - 17

Pre-Finals Aruba Caiso & Soca Monarch Festival (Joe Laveist - San Nicolas)

FRI. - JAN - 18

7 p.m. - Tumberito 2013 (Entertainment Center)

SAT. 19

7:30 p.m. - Final Aruba Caiso & Soca Monarch Festival (Joe Laveist - San Nicolas)

The 2013 Income Tax Package is out!

The Aruba Tax Bureau has informed all business owners that as of today the Income Tax Forms for 2013 have been distributed. Every business owner will receive their package in the upcoming days. This package includes all the forms regarding the collection of income tax and the AOV/AWW and AZV premiums for 2013.

The Tax Bureau encourages all recipients to check the package carefully to make certain that all the forms, to mention: declaration of premium of AOV/AWW/AZV for 2013, forms for 2012 – collective salary list of 2012, and the collective list of payments made to third parties in 2012. There should be 12 individual forms for declaration imprinted with the correct period (one form for each month).

Business owners with two or more businesses (sole proprietorship), will receive but one package which would be applicable to all of your businesses. This means that a declaration should be made for all employees together on a single form. The same is for all payouts made during 2013.

For more information, please contact the Tax Bureau at Tel. 522-7423, or at their offices in Camacuri or the government office in San Nicolaas.

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Dreamliner woes turn into Boeing nightmare

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Boeing's 787 Dreamliner is suffering serious teething problems that have grounded the plane in Japan and stoked market concerns about the US aerospace giant.

All Nippon Airways grounded its 787 fleet Wednesday after smoke in an electrical compartment forced an emergency landing. Japan Airlines followed suit. The combined 24 planes will be grounded at least through Thursday for safety checks.

The two Japanese airlines



account for almost half of the 50 787s already in service, and Boeing had hoped their fleets would serve as a shop window for a new model on which it has staked much of its business strategy.

It was the seventh safety

incident with the high-tech plane -- marketed by Boeing as the fuel-efficient future of aviation -- experienced by ANA and JAL in less than two weeks.

The mishaps included a fire in an unoccupied station-

ary aircraft, fuel leaks and a cracked cockpit windshield.

Until now, the rash of problems had not dented investor confidence in the aerospace giant. Since the first incident this year, on January 7, until the market closed Tuesday, Boeing's share value had climbed 0.6 percent.

But on Wednesday, Boeing shares plunged 3.4 percent in New York, dragging down the Dow Jones Industrial Average.

Boeing has staked its fu-

ture on the all-new aircraft, which is heavily equipped with electronics. Lightweight composite materials, to boost fuel efficiency, comprise 50 percent of the Dreamliner.

Boeing, which touts the 787 as the most successful twin-aisle launch of a commercial plane in the company's history, says it has more than 800 unfilled orders with 58 customers worldwide.

24/7WallSt's McIntyre warned that the pileup of incidents could threaten Boeing's order book.

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Netanyahu to Obama: Only Israel knows its own best interests



JERUSALEM (AFP) - Only the people of Israel can decide who will represent their best interests, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday in remarks directed at US President Barack Obama a week before a general election.

"I think everyone knows that the citizens of Israel are the only ones who can decide who will faithfully represent the vital interests of the state," he said.

His remarks came in response to an article by prominent Bloomberg columnist Jeffrey Goldberg in which he quoted Obama as saying repeatedly: "Israel doesn't know what its own best interests are."

Obama, he wrote, appeared to see Netanyahu as a "political coward" vis-a-vis the peace process with the Palestinians who was completely "captive to the settler lobby," and whose ongoing settlement activity was moving Israel "down a path toward near total isolation."

Senior figures from Netanyahu's ruling rightwing Likud party reacted furiously, accusing the US leader of "gross interference" in the upcoming election, which is widely expected to see Israelis reelect their hawkish

prime minister.

"Over the last four years, we have faced tremendous pressure and we will continue to stand up for the vital interests of Israel and its security," Netanyahu told reporters on a tour of an army base near Gaza, his remarks broadcast on public radio.

"We will do everything necessary to defend the security of the citizens of Israel in this area as well as in other areas."

Venezuelan opposition irked by ailing Chavez signature

CARACAS (AFP) - Venezuela's opposition seized on just a few words -- cancer-stricken Hugo Chavez's signature on a decree -- Wednesday to demand the president clarify how sick he is and what he can and cannot do.

The official government gazette published a decree in which Elias Jaua was named as Venezuela's new foreign minister.

The decree -- number 9,351 -- is dated Caracas and carries the signature of Chavez, who underwent a fourth cancer operation on December 11 in Havana and remains there recovering

from a pulmonary infection.

He has not been seen in public since before he left Caracas.

Henrique Capriles, a state governor whom Chavez beat in Venezuela's October presidential election, said Wednesday it was puzzling that the decree on the new foreign minister carried the president's signature.

"If the president of the republic can sign decrees, I call on him to appear, speak to Venezuela and tell us what is happening in this government, because what Venezuela has is 'dis-government'," Capriles said.

Obama says US cannot put off gun control 'any longer'

Continued from pg 1

Many of the most robust recommendations require Congress to pass new laws and skeptics believe the power of the US gun lobby and antipathy towards gun control among conservative Republicans and Democrats could limit action.

If enacted in full, Obama's package would represent the most significant gun control reforms in decades, but it is unclear whether they could have prevented tragedies like the one at Sandy Hook.

Specifically, Obama's executive orders would require government agencies to make relevant information available to background checks, and to examine new ways to prevent "dangerous" people getting guns.

Obama ordered a new national campaign on safe and responsible gun ownership, a review of safety standards for gun safes in the home, and would provide training to schools on how to respond to an invasion by armed assailants.

In demanding action from Congress, arguing the single most important act in curbing gun crime would be to require background checks for all gun buyers, Obama also called on lawmakers to strengthen existing requirements.

Currently, licensed gun sellers are required to run background checks on customers, but private sales of firearms are exempt.

The president also urged Congress to renew a ban on assault weapons and to limit ammunition magazines to 10 rounds, in a bid to check the damage a shooter could do once engaged in a mass shooting.

The top gun lobby, the National Rifle Association (NRA) has expressed open skepticism whether a renewed and strengthened assault weapons ban could get through Congress.

The NRA opposes most of the White House's likely proposals, and has instead called for armed guards at every US school.

Obama's package also seeks to crack down on guns trafficking, calling on lawmakers to equip law enforce-

ment agencies with new powers to prosecute gun criminals.

Biden arrived at his recommendations after several weeks of meetings with gun crime victims, pro-gun control groups, firearms lobby officials, mental health advocates and makers of video games which include violent content.

White House officials, while acknowledging the stiff political winds Obama's proposals will face, argue that the trauma of the Newtown killings on December 14 especially, may have changed political realities on the issue.

A new ABC News/Washington Post poll found most Americans support banning assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines.

The poll found high support for some shifts: 88 percent favor background checks on buyers at gun shows; 76 percent urge checks on buyers of ammunition; 71 percent back the creation of a new federal database to track all gun sales; and 65 percent back banning high-capacity ammunition magazines.



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International News

Two killed as helicopter hits crane in London

LONDON (AFP) - Two people were killed on Wednesday when a helicopter hit a crane at a building site in central London during morning rush hour and plunged to the ground in a ball of flames.

Police said at least 13 people were injured after the aircraft smashed into a crane on the top of an unfinished luxury apartment block at Vauxhall, near the headquarters of the MI6 foreign spy agency on the south bank of the River Thames.

The top of the 51-storey building, The Tower at One St George Wharf, was shrouded in mist at the time. Police have ruled out a terror attack.

Witnesses said part of the crane fell on a street below sending construction workers fleeing for their lives, while the helicopter, spewing a thick plume of black smoke, cast burning wreckage over the ground.

Firefighters said they rescued a man from a burning car. An AFP reporter later saw a charred vehicle lying alongside a pile of twisted metal from the helicopter, just metres from a major train line.

They confirmed that the pilot, believed to be the only one in the helicopter, had been killed along with a person on the ground.

The commercial helicopter set off from Redhill in Surrey, just south of London, bound for Elstree to the north of the city. But bad weather caused the pilot to request a diversion to London Heliport, five kilometres (three miles) from the crash site, officials said.

The Air Accidents Investigation Branch is now looking into what happened, including suggestions that the crane did not have its aircraft warning light on.

Monaco royals denounce Grace Kelly movie as 'pure fiction'

MONACO (AFP) - Prince Albert of Monaco and his sisters have denounced a new biographical film starring Nicole Kidman as their mother Grace Kelly as "glamorised" and "pure fiction."

In a statement, Prince Albert II and Princesses Caroline and Stephanie said the film's script did not accurately portray events involving their mother, the Hollywood actress who married Monaco's Prince Rainier III in 1956.

"It tells a story, rewritten and unnecessarily glamorised... containing significant historical inaccuracies and a series of purely fictional scenes," the royals said in a statement.

The statement said the royal family had been granted access to the script and requested several changes, but the requests were not taken into account.

"Grace of Monaco", directed by France's Olivier

Dahan, will feature Australian actress Kidman and British actor Tim Roth as Prince Rainier.

It focuses on a six-month period in 1962 when Monaco was in a heated tax dispute with France and Alfred Hitchcock offered Kelly a chance to return to acting.

Filming of the new movie took place between September and December in Monaco, southern France and Italy.

The film's producer, Pierre-Ange Le Pogam, told AFP the production was meant to be a work of fiction and confirmed the royal family had been consulted.

"The palace was aware of the script and made requests for changes. We took most of their remarks into account, but not all," he said.

"The film is not intended to tell the true story of the principality," he said.

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Somali Shebab say have 'decided to execute' French hostage

NAIROBI (AFP) - Somali Islamists said Wednesday they have decided to execute the French intelligence officer they have held for more than three years and who was the object Saturday of a botched rescue bid.

The Al-Qaeda linked Shebab in a statement said they have "reached a unanimous decision to execute the French intelligence officer, Denis

Allex." Paris has said the officer was most likely killed by his captors during the failed rescue attempt.

A senior Shebab official confirmed to AFP on Wednesday that Allex "has been sentenced and this judgement will not be changed. As far as we are concerned this man should die."

The Shebab have not provided any proof that Allex,

presumed to be a pseudonym, is still alive.

The operation to free Allex, held since July 2009, was a failure, with two other French soldiers killed. The French retrieved one of the two bodies. Pictures of the second dead soldier, presented by the Shebab as the commander of the raid, have been posted on the Islamists' Twitter account.

Women, girls murdered in Guatemala violence

GUATEMALA CITY (AFP) - A wave of violence claimed the lives of six women and girls, including two young whose bodies were found early Wednesday dumped in the street, authorities said.

The girls, aged six and 12, displayed "apparent signs of strangulation," a report by

firefighters said.

Their bodies were found in the middle of the street in a southern district of the capital, near where the body of a 35-year-old woman was found "with a gunshot wound to the face and gagged with adhesive tape," firefighters said.

Drug traffickers and armed

gangs are blamed for an epidemic of violence that has claimed more than 5,000 lives in 2012, one of the highest homicide rates in Latin America, according to official figures.

The police said about 700 women a year are victims of deadly violence in Guatemala.

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Health & Living

Australian study turns HIV against itself



SYDNEY (AFP) - An Australian scientist said he had discovered a way to turn the HIV virus against itself in human cells in the laboratory, in an important advance in the quest for an AIDS cure.

David Harrich from the Queensland Institute of Medical Research said he modified a protein in HIV that normally helps the virus spread, into a "potent" inhibitor.

The protein was introduced to immune cells targeted by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), where it slowed the reproduction of the virus after infection.

The experiments were conducted in a lab dish, and thorough testing on lab animals is needed before any human trials can begin.

Harrich's team, whose study is published in the journal Human Gene Therapy, said the modified protein dubbed Nullbasic inhibited virus replication about eight- to ten-fold in some cells.

"If this research continues down its strong path, and bear in mind there are many hurdles to clear, we're looking at a cure for AIDS," the researcher said.

Commenting on the study, Frank Wegmann, an Oxford University HIV vaccine researcher, told AFP a Nullbasic-

based drug was "quite far from application".

Creating a drug would be challenging, he said, as it would require introducing "designed" information into the genes of people to be treated.

"The immune cells of the blood are the primary cells which are infected by HIV and if you want to have a cure with this new protein, you need to... get every immune cell to make this protein," he explained.

This would require gene therapy -- a complicated, rare, potentially dangerous and very expensive option.

"They (the Australian researchers) have partly addressed that question. They have partly tested that (gene therapy), but not really in patients or in infected people, only in the lab."

Harrich said Nullbasic held promise for curbing the spread of the virus as well as for treating people who already have AIDS, and described it as "fighting fire with fire".

"The virus might infect a cell but it wouldn't spread," he said. "You would still be infected with HIV, it's not a cure for the virus, but the virus would stay latent, it wouldn't wake up, so it wouldn't develop into AIDS."

"With a treatment like this,

you would maintain a healthy immune system."

An HIV-infected person is said to have AIDS when their count of CD4 immune system cells drops below 200 per microlitre of blood or they develop any one of 22 opportunistic infections like cancer or tuberculosis as a result.

Most people infected with HIV, if left untreated, would develop AIDS about 10 to 15 years later, according to the UN. Antiretroviral treatments can prolong this window period.

The new Nullbasic therapy, if proven, could see the spread of HIV halted indefinitely, bringing an end to the deadly condition, said Harrich.

Using a treatment based on a single protein could spell an end to onerous multiple drug regimes for HIV patients, meaning a better quality of life and lower costs.

Animal trials are due to start this year.

UN figures show the number of people infected with HIV worldwide rose to 34 million in 2011 from 33.5 million in 2010.

The vast majority (23.5 million) live in sub-Saharan Africa, with another 4.2 million in South and Southeast Asia.

There were 1.7 million AIDS-related deaths worldwide in 2011 -- 24 percent fewer than in 2005 and nearly six percent below the 2010 level.

New HIV infections have at least halved in 25 low and middle income countries over the past decade.

The UN said in November that achieving zero new infections in children appeared increasingly possible.

Dengue showing global 'epidemic potential': WHO



GENEVA (AFP) - The World Health Organisation said on Wednesday that it had charted progress in the fight against tropical diseases but warned that dengue fever was spreading at an alarming rate.

"In 2012, dengue ranked as the fastest spreading vector-borne viral disease, with an epidemic potential in the world, registering a 30-fold increase in disease incidence over the past 50 years," the Geneva-based UN agency said in a report released Wednesday.

The increased transmission rate of the deadly mosquito-borne disease was due to climate change and a greater movement of people, the agency said.

An annual two million cases of dengue fever were reported over the last two years by 100 countries, with between 5,000 to 6,000 of

them resulting in death.

But the WHO's Raman Velayudhan said the disease was likely underreported and estimated there were as many as 50 million cases a year with more than 20,000 deaths.

Dengue is spread by one of four viruses transmitted by the Aedes aegypti mosquito. It causes high fever, headaches, itching and joint pains. At an advanced stage it can lead to haemorrhaging and death.

But the agency also reported "unprecedented progress against 17 neglected tropical diseases", saying for example that rabies had been eliminated in several countries.

It added that guinea worm -- a water-borne infection that causes agonising pain and leaves sufferers unable to function for months -- was on its way to total eradication.



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Sci-Tech

Orange says it has forced Google to pay for traffic

PARIS (AFP) - The head of French telecoms operator Orange said it had been able to impose a deal on Google to compensate it for the vast amounts of traffic sent across its networks.

Orange CEO Stephane Richard said on France's BFM Business TV that with 230 million clients and areas where Google could not get around its network, it had been able to reach a "balance of forces" with the Internet search giant.

Network operators have been fuming for years that Google, with its search engine and YouTube video service,

generates huge amounts of traffic but does not compensate them for using their networks.

Richard put Google traffic over Orange's Internet networks at around 50 percent.

The Orange chief executive said that Internet companies and network operators were interdependent and criticised a recent controversial move by a French competitor, Free.

Free blocked Internet ads, drawing strident protest from websites reliant on advertising that the move would kill their business model, until the French government ordered it stop the practice.

Google has also been faced with demands for compensation from content providers such as newspapers, who charge the search giant makes lots of advertising revenue from referencing their material.

France and Germany are considering imposing compensation schemes on Google as the company has refused to reach any deal with media outlets.

French President Francois Hollande warned Google on Wednesday that his government would legislate a so-called Google tax if the company doesn't reach a deal with French media companies.

Soot is number two human cause of global warming: study

WASHINGTON (AFP) - Soot is the second-biggest human contributor to global warming behind carbon dioxide, and its impact on climate change has until now been sharply underestimated, a new study has revealed.

Soot, or black carbon, is generated by the incomplete combustion of oil, coal, wood or other fuels. Sources range from diesel engines to wood-burning stoves.

For the new study, scientists

took into account the accumulation of soot in the atmosphere and the amount of solar heat that the particles absorb.

Soot only remains in the atmosphere for seven to 10 days, meaning that efforts to reduce the quantity of black carbon emissions could have a quick and dramatic impact on global warming.

In contrast, limiting global warming by reducing emissions of carbon dioxide is more of a long-term goal, given the accumulation of the green-

house gas in the atmosphere, where it can remain for decades.

The uncertainties about the impact of soot are rooted in the fact that researchers do not fully understand how black carbon interacts with clouds.

Soot is a main target of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants -- a multinational initiative backed by the United States, Canada and Mexico, among others.

Schools should ditch books: New York mayor hopeful

NEW YORK (AFP) - New York students would ditch textbooks and be issued tablets under a proposal by a leading candidate for mayor.

Christine Quinn, the current city council speaker and a favorite to replace her ally Mayor Michael Bloomberg in November, said the technological upgrade would open "limitless" possibilities.

"Thanks to the Internet, teachers in any given subject can share lessons and materials with colleagues around the world. They can organize those lessons into online textbooks, which their students can read on tablets in school

and at home," she said.

"So a teacher in the Bronx can pull together the most relevant information for his class, and update it throughout the year to stay current. He can incorporate videos and interactive multimedia assignments that better engage kids living in a digital world."

According to Quinn the project would pay for itself.

"We currently spend more than a \$100 million a year on textbooks. That's enough money to buy tablets for every student in New York City public schools, and cover staff costs," she said.



HARBIN (AFP) : A robot serves guests in a robot-themed restaurant in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang province on January 16, 2013. Twenty robots perform a variety of chores, from ushering in guests to waiting tables and cooking dishes.

COMICS

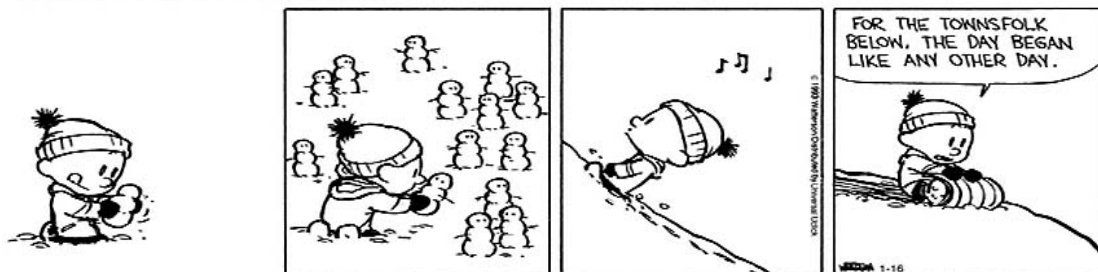
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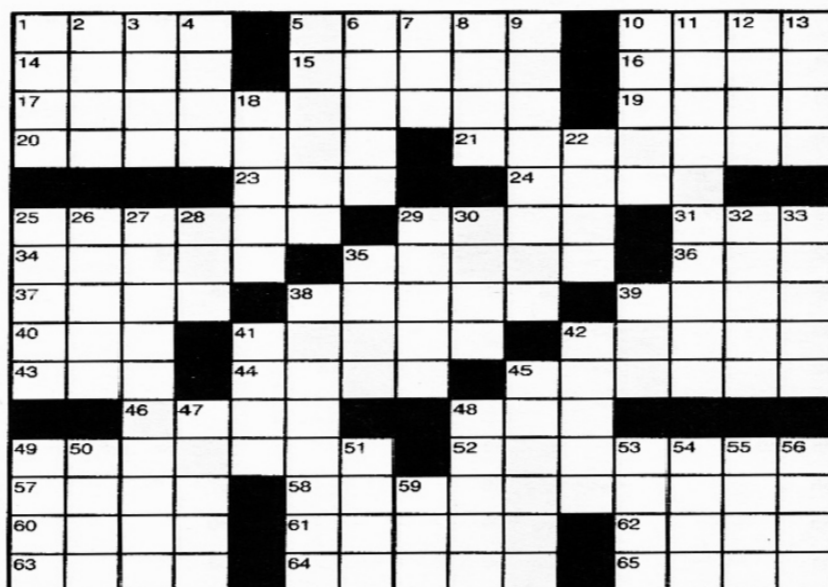
FOR MY DEFENSE

ACROSS

1. Federal watchdog gp.
5. Estimate
10. From a distance
14. "Cat on ___ Tin Roof"
15. Boo-boo
16. Piano novelty song
17. Clementine's dad
19. Big smile
20. 14-line poems
21. Paid homage to
23. "We ___ the Champions" (Queen)
24. ___ Parker
25. Like some galas
29. "Hamlet" has five
31. Tail tremor
34. Equip again
35. Grown up
36. "___ Loser" (Beatles song)
37. Whacks, to a gangster
38. Lawrence's land, poetically
39. "Get Down ___" (Kool & the Gang hit)
40. Golf expert
41. Semblance
42. Site for a dainty tattoo
43. Neighbor of Leb.
44. Soccer great
45. Didn't hit the bull's-eye
46. Day after Wed.
48. Pregrown grass
49. Supposed nail-strengthener
52. Euripidean tragedy

DOWN

1. Clumsy fellows
2. "Go away!"
3. Satchmo's tool
4. Envelope abbr.
5. High society
6. Ascend
7. Vase's kin
8. "Mr. Deeds ___ to Town"
9. In a wayward
10. Historic Scottish county
11. Nap
12. "Tell Me ___" (Janie Fricke)
13. Shoemaking strip
18. Fermenting agent
22. Like Hilton's horizon
25. Globules
26. Prepare Mexican beans
27. Easy as pie
28. Cookie, to Alexander
29. Trite saying
30. Rubik's ___
32. Walk ___ in my shoes
33. Like many an exclusive community
35. Russian lake
38. D.C. university
39. Switch positions
41. "___ My Hand In" ("Hello Dolly" song)
42. Helper
45. Very glum
47. Author Bret
48. Toddlers' trampolines
49. Tempest
50. Iniquitous
51. ___ contendere
53. Tuxedo shirt fastener
54. Actress Louise
55. Blyton or Bagnold
56. Drill instructors: abbr.
59. CLXVII x VI



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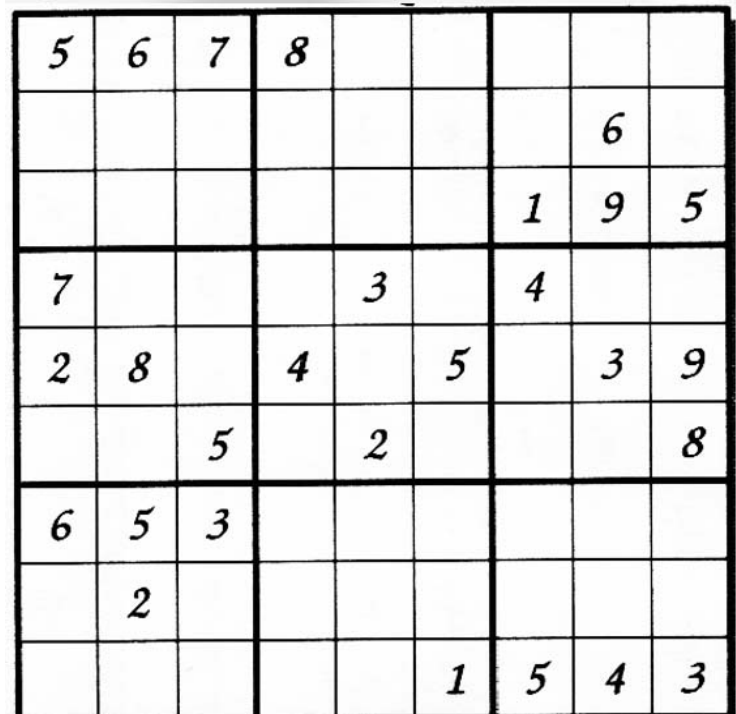
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Sudoku



SOLUTION

5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4
9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	9
8	1	2	9	7	6	5	4	3
6	5	9	1	2	3	4	7	8
7	5	8	1	9	6	4	3	2
5	6	1	2	9	7	8	4	3
2	9	8	7	6	5	4	1	3
4	3	6	1	8	9	5	2	7

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9. A number is Never repeated in a row or column. In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9

Finance

US economy picks up since November: Fed

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The US economy has picked up pace since November, with Christmas sales modestly stronger and New York and New Jersey rebounding from Hurricane Sandy, the Federal Reserve's Beige Book showed Wednesday.

But the survey of regional economic activity, important to setting monetary policy, showed manufacturing still sluggish, hiring and inflation still subdued and the stifling effect of the fiscal cliff fight still lingering.

But retailers and auto dealers expected slower sales growth "citing concerns that consumers will spend cautiously due to ongoing fiscal uncertainty."

Real estate business was broadly steady or improved, and rains helped ameliorate some of the drought conditions in the farm belt.

But it added that trends in unemployment and prices were "relatively unchanged" across its 12 districts.

That added no new pressure on the Fed's Federal Open Market Committee to tighten monetary policy in its next policy meeting on January 29-30.

In its December meeting the FOMC approved a new open-ended program of bond buying to put pressure downward on long-term interest rates to strengthen growth.

It also set, for the first time, explicit targets for unemployment and inflation that would lead to tightening up monetary policy.

The Fed has been frustrated by persistent high unemployment and especially high long-term joblessness, and has made clear that bringing those numbers down is its priority in the absence of inflationary pressures.

But the minutes from that meeting showed slight movement among FOMC members toward earlier tightening: sev-

eral suggested that the bond-buying "quantitative easing" policies could be wound up by the end of this year, earlier than markets had anticipated so far.

The Beige Book survey showed that manufacturing, which was hoped to play a key part in driving continued growth, was only mixed, with half of the Fed districts reporting no change or contraction.

There was some impact from the intense debate over the economy-crunching fiscal cliff austerity measures that had been due to be implemented from January 1.

The resolution of the tax increase part of the cliff, and the postponement of how to deal with severe programmed

spending cuts, or sequestration, helped some businesses, respondents told the Fed.

In the Chicago region, "Specialty metal manufacturers reported a decline in quoting and new orders as customers continued to delay purchases until the last minute. In contrast, a contact in the defense industry noted a substantial rebound in orders due to the two-month delay in sequestration," the report said.

In addition, a Chicago region recruiting firm "noted that customers that are heavily dependent upon government spending were very cautious about increasing headcount amidst the fiscal cliff negotiations."

World Bank economist urges end to US fiscal fights

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The World Bank's chief economist called on the United States Tuesday to end a series of political budget battles by undertaking structural economic reforms.

"It is time now for the US to move on from fighting each fiscal fire successively," Kaushik Basu said in a conference call on the bank's latest economic report.

The United States should step up efforts "to discover nonflammable material, that is making structural reforms, so that these flashpoint don't occur with as much regularity," he added.

After avoiding the worst of the tax measures enshrined in the year-end fiscal cliff, the United States is now grappling

with the debt ceiling crisis, with Republican lawmakers tying an increase in the nation's legal borrowing limit to deficit-reduction negotiations.

President Barack Obama on Monday refused to negotiate the debt ceiling and warned Republicans not to use the issue as a bargaining chip.

The Treasury announced on December 31 it would take extraordinary measures to keep the government's debt below the current \$16.4 trillion limit. Without an agreement in Congress to raise the limit, the United States could default on its debt.

A similar showdown occurred in mid-2011, leading rating firm Standard & Poor's to cut its prized "AAA" rating on the United States.



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Oil market well-balanced, well-supplied: UAE minister

ABU DHABI (AFP) - The world oil market is well-balanced and well-supplied, United Arab Emirates Energy Minister Mohammed al-Hamli said on Wednesday, adding his country plans to raise oil output capacity.

"The market is well-balanced. Maybe it's a little bit over-supplied, but generally it is well-supplied," Hamli told reporters on the sidelines of the first meeting between Arab and South American energy ministers.

"We keep monitoring the market all the time and right now, the market is capable of taking all we produce... there is no need to cut supplies," he said.

Hamli said his country is pumping 2.6 million barrels per day and plans to raise output capacity to 3.0 million bpd by the end of the year.

The minister said the world demand for oil is "in a good shape," adding that there will be an increase in demand this year but below the growth in 2012.

"Demand will depend on

how the crisis is handled... It is coming mainly from Asian countries -- China and India and the Middle East," Hamli said.

He said UAE is looking to import LNG gas to meet the peak demand in the summer, but provided no further details on when the imports will begin.

Oil prices rebounded in Asian trade Wednesday on stronger US demand for heating oil but an impending showdown in the US Congress over the debt ceiling could limit gains.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in February was up 26 cents to \$93.53 a barrel and Brent North Sea crude for February delivery climbed 36 cents to \$110.66 in the afternoon.

The gains were driven by data showing better-than-expected demand for distillates, including heating oil, in the United States, said Victor Shum managing director of energy consultancy IHS Purvin and Gertz in Singapore.

YESTERDAY'S Crossword Answer



FRANKFURT AM MAIN : Bars of gold are piled up during a press conference at the German Federal Bank in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany, on January 16, 2013. The German central Bundesbank said it will relocate parts of its gold stored abroad following recent accusations that it is not keeping proper track of its vast reserves.

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Canada	CAD	1.77	1.79	1.82
Britain	GBP	2.80	2.85	2.89
Switzerland	CHF	191.71	192.43	192.70
Netherlands	EUR	230.59	232.69	238.85
Sweden	SEK	25.91	26.63	27.93
Denmark	DKK	30.23	30.95	32.25
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Saudi clerics protest king's move to empower women

RIYADH (AFP) - A group of hardline clerics protested outside the royal palace in Riyadh against the king's decision to appoint 30 women to the kingdom's top advisory body, a YouTube video posted on Wednesday showed.

The footage of Tuesday's demonstration showed clerics protesting what they said were "dangerous changes in the country and these latest appointments in the Shura Council that do not represent the philanthropists and the good people."

"These appointments are not representative of the whole society," one of the clerics told the small gathering, referring to King Abdullah's decision on Friday to name 30 women to the 150-seat Shura Council.

The group called for clerics to be granted similar representation on the council, which is appointed by the king to advise him on policy but cannot legislate.

The unidentified cleric said the group had gathered to demand a meeting with the head of the royal court, Khaled al-Tuwejari, to offer him "advice".

He was also shown criticising the refusal by Saudi officials to meet the protesters who had rallied despite the kingdom's ban on protests. The video footage showed a police car parked on the opposite side of the road.

Saudi human rights lawyer Walid Abulkhair told AFP that "the protest was against the appointment of women to the Shura Council."

Abdullah's decrees marked a breakthrough in the conservative kingdom that imposes stringent restrictions on females, who are banned from driving and denied the right to travel without male consent.

The monarch took the decisions following consultations with religious leaders in Saudi Arabia, which applies a strict

version of Islamic sharia law, according to the decrees.

The 30 chosen women include university graduates, human rights activists and two princesses.

Abdullah had been carefully treading towards change, introducing municipal elections for the first time in 2005.

In 2011 he granted women the right to vote and run as candidates in the next local election, set for 2015, because "we refuse to marginalise women's role in Saudi society."

Italy dog frequent churchgoer since owner died

ROME (AFP) - Since his owner died two months ago, Tommy the dog has not missed a single mass in the small church in southern Italy where his mistress's funeral was held, Italian media said Wednesday.

When the bells of the Santa Maria Assunta church begin to toll each afternoon in San Donaci near Brindisi, the 12-year-old German Shepherd sets off from the village to get himself a front row seat next to the altar, Il Messaggero newspaper said.

His owner, who was known in local dialect as "Maria tu lu campu" -- "Maria of the fields" -- had lived alone with Tommy and three other rescue dogs, who used to follow her faithfully on her daily rounds and have now been adopted by the village.

After following his mistress's coffin up to the church on the day of her funeral, Tommy has returned daily, sitting quietly throughout masses, baptisms and funerals, according to local priest Donato Panna, who now wouldn't do without him.

Donkey Sanctuary organizes walkathon



-- The eighth annual donkey walkathon is coming up: an 6.5-kilometer long spectacular walk through Aruba's countryside. Last year the walkathon was a great success with more than 350 participants and a few donkeys. This year the organizers can once again count on donkeys Ban Ban and Igor to join in! Held on Saturday, January 19, the walk will be sponsored by Bucuti Resort.

Registration is possible from 4 pm at the Ayo Rock Formation; the walk starts there at 5. For your AWG. 10,-- registration fee you also participate in a raffle and a small attention courtesy of Bucuti Resort. So get out of your lazy chair and come and join the fun together with the donkeys.

For more information about the walkathon, please call 593-2933.



Taiwan confiscates 435 dog penises

TAIPEI (AFP) - Animal disease officials in Taiwan Wednesday said they had confiscated more than 400 dried dog penises, testicles and various internal organs in a raid on an illegal slaughterhouse.

The Animal Disease Control Centre said a total of 435 penises were discovered in a fridge along with the other body parts, while 12 fresh dog corpses were also found in the raid at the slaughterhouse in western Yunlin county.

It was not immediately clear why the owner of the abattoir kept the body parts, a spokeswoman said. But local media suggested the man could have used the penises as an ingredient in herbal wine due to the belief they could help boost male potency.

Two live dogs were rescued during the raid and officials also discovered a number of collars, indicating some of the dead animals could have previously been pets, the spokeswoman said.

He could face a maximum one-year jail term and a fine of up to Tw\$1 million (\$34,500) if found to be a repeat violator of the animal protection law, which bans the killing of dogs.

While dog meat featured on menus in Taiwan in the past, it is now an offence to eat either dogs or cats.

Pope's hunky secretary makes front page of Vanity Fair



ROME (AFP) - Pope Benedict XVI's dashing personal secretary Georg Gaenswein has made the front page of the Italian edition of Vanity Fair, under the headline "being beautiful is not a sin."

"The George Clooney of St. Peter's is the Vatican's number two, following his ordination as bishop," says the magazine, which goes on sale on today and charts Gaenswein's rise up the Holy See hierarchy.

The blue-eyed 56-year-old, who lives in the Vatican as one of the tiny state's 832 residents, receives love letters from enamoured fans and has learnt not to be distracted from his work by the endless compliments on his looks, the magazine says.

Gaenswein is not officially the Vatican's number two -- that role is held by the powerful secretary of state Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

But his promotion to Prefect of the Papal Household in December means Benedict's closest adviser wields more influence than ever.

A dapper figure in his black robes and a broad pink sash, Gaenswein has been a constant presence at the pope's side at the Vatican and on foreign trips and his close relationship with the pontiff is said to have sparked jealousy within the Vatican walls.

The son of a blacksmith, Gaenswein was ordained in 1984 and rose through the ranks to become Joseph Ratzinger's secretary in 2003.

When Ratzinger was elected to the papacy in 2005, he kept the blond-haired monsignor by his side, propelling him into the limelight, much to the delight of the international media, instantly smitten by the pope's dashing assistant.

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Adventures in eating at the new Rembrandt Café



Rembrandt Café in the South Beach Center has always been known as a bastion of authentic Dutch cuisine, but under new management of the amiable "Happy" Hans, who is thrilled to be realizing his dream with his own place, a new menu is proving exceptionally attractive and affordable.

We found the meats and poultry exceptionally tender and tasty, and the cooking method is extremely healthy and low fat. Hans informed us their poultry comes from Holland and meat from Argentina, and they are certified free of growth enhancers and other undesirable chemicals.

found the main course with side dishes, was alone more than enough to fill up three hungry people.

Rembrandt has a charming, Old World, Dutch Pub ambiance and offers both indoor and outdoor dining on their cozy terrace. The service crew is a delight, and even the wine list is very reasonably priced. Aside from their house special, they offer an attractive menu of a la carte dishes including schnitzel, with an emphasis on fresh fish, also moderately priced. Unquestionably, the Old Dutch Gourmet is the big attraction, and you can't beat this great deal.

Rembrandt Café is open seven days a week from noon until 1:00 AM and until 3:00 AM on Fridays and Saturdays when they feature live music after 11:00 PM. After enjoying a unique dining adventure, patrons can linger at what turns into a chic lounge in the late hours; highly recommended for excellent value, delicious food and congenial service.



Our team of Morning News taste testers decided to check out the house specialty, "Old Dutch Gourmet" meal at only \$27.50 per person, and recommend it heartily. It is an exceptional taste treat and something really different.

The main course entails an open grill placed at your table, with an ample assortment of chicken, beef, pork and shrimp for diners to cook to their preferred degree of doneness. They are served with three tasty sauces, creamy garlic, a mildly spicy and slightly sweet Thai Chili Sauce, and Indonesian soy that is quite different to what most may be accustomed, but an integral part of Dutch cooking.

The difference is notable in the flavor, and the preparation is fun. The meal also includes a choice of soup or salad of the day and dessert of the day; we



A selection of chicken, pork and beef

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Tennis: Djokovic, Sharapova irresistible in Melbourne

MELBOURNE (AFP) - Defending champion Novak Djokovic oozed class in an awesome performance at the Australian Open Wednesday as Maria Sharapova stormed

into the third round without dropping a game.

Djokovic, up last on centre court and chasing the first Australian Open hat-trick since the 1960s, wasted little

time in dispatching America's Harrison, who was never close to taking his first ever set off the Serb.

The world number one, handed an uncomplicated draw after the withdrawal of Rafael Nadal, was irresistible as he blew away Harrison 6-1, 6-2, 6-3, but afterwards he spared a thought for his floundering opponent.

With Roger Federer and Andy Murray both playing on today, David Ferrer and Tomas Berdych also pressed their outside claims as they reached the third round, along with 2006 finalist Marcos Baghdatis and Japan's Kei Nishikori.

And as women's pre-tournament favourite Serena Williams, a day after rolling her ankle, skipped a public practice session, Sharapova showed why she must be taken seriously for her second Australian Open title.

Sharapova, the world number two, had been flawless in her 6-0, 6-0 opener against Olga Puchkova, and she remarkably repeated the scoreline -- a feat not achieved at a Grand Slam since 1985 -- against Japan's Misaki Doi.

Standing in Sharapova's way in round three is Serena's sister Venus, who is climbing back up the rankings after a long spell of illness and dispatched France's Alize Cornet on the centre court.

Fourth seed Agnieszka Radwanska smoothly put away Irina-Camelia Begu to reach the third round, where she was joined by German fifth seed Angelique Kerber and China's sixth seed Li Na.

Ultimate Fighting Championship



SAO PAULO : Brazilian mixed martial arts wrestler Godofredo Pepey practices during the training session of UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) in a temporary ring under a bridge in downtown Sao Paulo, Brazil.



UFC will take place at Ibirapuera gymnasium in Sao Paulo on January 19 with the final match between Brazilian Vitor Belfort and British Michael Bisping. Photo shows Vitor Belfort (L) practicing .

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Sport

Cycling: UCI urged to offer amnesty for repentant cheats



PARIS (AFP) - The International Cycling Union (UCI) have been urged to reconsider offering an amnesty for riders who admit taking performance-enhancing drugs in the wake of the Lance Armstrong doping scandal.

The independent panel probing claims of a cover-up between the sport's governing body and the shamed US rider suggested an amnesty would be "in the interest not only of the commission of inquiry but also of professional cycling as a whole".

The commission, set up by the UCI in October, comprises two Britons -- former appeal court judge Philip Otton and Paralympian great Tanni Grey-Thomson and an Australian lawyer, Malcolm Holmes.

The panel noted in a statement that the UCI had rejected the idea of the establishment of a "truth and reconciliation" commission last January.

In contrast, the US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), which last year said Armstrong was at the heart of the most sophisticated doping programme in the history of sport, favours a "warts-and-all" approach to allow the sport to wipe the slate clean.

Pressure group "Change Cycling Now", which includes former US champion and Tour de France winner Greg LeMond, backs calls for a truth commission followed by partial or full amnesties for riders willing to admit doping.

The independent commission's comments come on the eve of the broadcast of a pre-recorded interview between Armstrong and chat show host Oprah Winfrey in which he admits doping.

The panel, which is due to hold hearings in London in April and report by June 1, said they regretted that the UCI on the one hand and World Anti-Doping Agency and USADA on the other could not agree on a common strategy to tackle the issue.

The trio said it had written to world cycling chiefs to ask them to reconsider their position.

However, their pleas look like falling on deaf ears as later on Wednesday the UCI reacted by saying granting an amnesty contravened WADA's very own anti-doping laws.

"Any amnesty from UCI would have limited effect as the IOC (International Olympic Committee), national anti-doping authorities, sponsors and indeed criminal authorities could, as we have seen in the Lance Armstrong case, pursue actions against athletes admitting to doping.

"In contrast, WADA's proposal was that anyone who came forward with information would be given a complete amnesty, with no period of ineligibility and no loss of results, and, incredibly, would be given psychological support to be financed by the UCI."

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NFL is world's best attended pro sports league



LOS ANGELES (AFP) - The National Football League beat out Bundesliga Football for the honor of being the best attended professional sports league in the world, Sporting-intelligence.com reported.

The NFL took the top spot with an average of 67,591 fans per game in 2012, an increase from 67,394 a year earlier.

Germany's Bundesliga came in second with 45,116 average fans per game in 2011-12 -- the highest average ever for that league -- up from 42,673 during the prior season.

The English Premier League (34,602) took third place, surpassing Australia's Aussie Rules football, which saw a season-on-season decline from 36,428 to 32,748.

The National Hockey League attracts the largest crowds of the indoor sports, with an attendance of 17,455

in 2011-12, finishing just ahead of the National Basketball Association (17,274).

There have been no NHL games this season after the owners locked out the players in a labor dispute that began in September.

Two sports that have seen increases in average attendance year-on-year are Major League Baseball and the Canadian Football League.

MLB came in fifth with an average attendance of 30,895, up from 30,366 a year earlier. The CFL sits seventh with an average of 27,882, compared to 27,192 previously.

Sixth place went to Spain's La Liga, with an average attendance of 28,462, down from 29,128 the year before.

NFL: Eagles, Bears name new coaches

PHILADELPHIA (AFP) - The Philadelphia Eagles and Chicago Bears named new head coaches on Wednesday, with the Eagles confirming they had lured Chip Kelly from the University of Oregon.

Kelly guided the Oregon Ducks to a 46-7 record in his four years at the university and to a prestigious bowl game in each of those seasons.

The 49-year-old is a strategic innovator who favors a fast-paced offense, his Oregon teams averaging 44.7 points per game. He'll be coaching in the NFL for the first time.

He replaces Andy Reid, who was sacked after 14 seasons with the Eagles the day after the club completed a 4-12 season.

"Chip Kelly will be an outstanding head coach for the Eagles," Philadelphia owner Jeffrey Lurie said.

"He has a brilliant football mind. He motivates his team with his actions as well as his words. He will be a great leader for us and will bring a fresh, energetic approach to our team."

In Chicago, the Bears announced that Marc Trestman will become the 14th coach in club history, taking the job after spending five years as coach of the Montreal Alouettes in the Canadian Football League.

He led the club to Grey Cup CFL titles in 2009 and 2010 and was the CFL coach of the year in 2009.

Prior to joining the CFL, Trestman was an NFL assistant coach with the Vikings, Buccaneers, Browns, 49ers, Lions, Cardinals, Raiders and Dolphins.

Trestman will replace Lovie Smith, who was sacked by the Bears when they missed the playoffs despite a 10-6 regular-season record.

Football: Bayern pull off major coup as they hire Guardiola

BERLIN (AFP) - German giants Bayern Munich won the battle to secure the most sought after coach in football when former Barcelona handler Pep Guardiola agreed to take over as head coach for the 2013/14 season.

The 41-year-old Spaniard -

who last week said he was ready to return to coaching after a brief sabbatical since stepping down from the Barcelona hotseat at the end of last season - signed a three year contract.

Guardiola, who twice guided Barcelona to the

Champions League title, will replace current Munich boss Jupp Heynckes, whose contract expires in June, just after his 68th birthday.

Bayern, who have not won any silverware in the past two seasons, have pulled off a major coup as Guardiola had been linked with jobs in England with both Chelsea and Manchester City being mentioned.

Bayern, who have won a record 22 German league titles as well as four Champions League trophies, made no secret of their delight at beating off high-profile rivals for his signature.

Despite all his success at Barcelona, Guardiola - whom moody Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic once dubbed "a philosopher" as an insult - will have his work cut out at Bayern -- where immediate success is demanded.



BARCELONA (AFP) : Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi poses with his 4 FIFA Ballon d'Or trophies prior to the Spanish Copa del Rey (King's Cup) quarter-final football match FC Barcelona vs Malaga CF at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona yesterday.

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NBA: Knicks glad not to nix London trip



LONDON (AFP) - New York Knicks coach Mike Woodson has no problems playing the Detroit Pistons in London today even though the upheaval of travelling to Britain comes at an awkward time for the team.

The latest NBA regular season match to be staged in the British capital comes with the Knicks top of the Atlantic Division and bidding for a place in the play-offs.

Knicks duo Carmelo Anthony and Tyson Chandler will have happy memories of their most recent match in London after helping the United States win gold at last year's London Olympics.

But with the Knicks in play-off contention, the long flight to London and the attendant distractions might be regarded as something of an annoyance.

Woodson, however, sees things differently.

"If I thought that, then when the commissioner called and gave us this opportunity to come over and play I would never have agreed to that," Woodson said Wednesday ahead of the match at the O2 Arena.

"I think as an organisation, to be able to go outside your country and expand your sport,

to me it helps everybody. We have to travel a little bit further but this is an important game on our schedule."

Anthony's last trip to London saw him surpass the United States' single-game scoring haul, with 37 points during their record-breaking 156-73 rout thrashing of Nigeria at Olympic Basketball Arena.

He has since continued that impressive form at home, with only Kobe Bryant ahead of him in this season's individual NBA scoring rankings.

For a Detroit side struggling in the Central Division, containing Anthony will be key to their hopes of victory.

But Pistons coach Lawrence Brown agreed that was easier said than done.

"Carmelo is a great scorer he's a guy that can put together a 40-point game like its nothing," Frank explained.

"He's a professional scorer, that's what we call him, he can score in a bunch of different ways: he can shoot the three, he can score off the dribble, he can score in the post. He's a constant threat but the Knicks are a strong team and we have to be ready for all of them."

There are plenty of coaches across all sports who shy away

from talking about their team as title contenders, fearing they might 'jinx' their side or be perceived as adopting a disrespectful approach to their opponents.

Woodson though had no trouble embracing the idea of the Knicks as potential NBA champions.

"Do we have an opportunity to win a title this year? Absolutely," Woodson said. "If we stay healthy and play at a level that I think we can play at we'll put ourselves in that position."

"But first we've got to play the Pistons and we'll deal with that first and foremost," he added.

Football: Saudi fire Dutch coach Rijkaard

RIYADH (AFP) - The Saudi football federation sacked the national team's Dutch manager Frank Rijkaard on Wednesday after Saudi Arabia failed to pass the group stage of the 2013 Gulf Cup of Nations in Bahrain. Rijkaard is the second manager to lose his job at the championship after Qatar announced the dismissal of Brazilian coach Paulo Autuori on Tuesday following the team's elimination in the first round.

Saudi Arabia lost 2-0 to Iraq and 1-0 to Kuwait, and had a lone victory over Yemen, 2-0. Rijkaard's contract with Saudi Arabia was reportedly worth \$9 million, with a penalty clause of more than \$4 million in case of dismissal. Prince Nawaf bin Faisal, has said that he is willing to foot the bill of ending Rijkaard's three-year contract.



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